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Playing in the Shadows

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Playing in the Shadows,

PS² is a Belfast-based, voluntary arts organisation that initiates projects inside and outside its project space. It seeks to develop a socio-spatial practice that responds to the post-conflict context of Northern Ireland, with particular focus on active intervention and social interaction between local people, creative practitioners, multidisciplinary groups and theorists.

The exhibition shows those projects of PS² that are located outside the project space. They have been curated over the past nine years mainly at empty sites and public spaces, in locations which are under-resourced in terms of cultural provisions and community facilities.

Our interest is to interact as artists and cultural workers, with people and residents where they live, work or just pass-by. That means we have to leave the dedicated and sheltered 'white cube' and mix with real life: the street, the urban niche or the rural periphery. The move to the outside is less a result of spatial interest or concerns for the built environment, and more concerned with our understanding of art and creativity and their functions in society. We want to be socially relevant, close to reality and at the same time utopian and experimental.

One of our projects and publications, 'city supplements' echoes the approach of PS² in its outdoor and often long-term interventions. The work can itself be seen as a 'supplement' to the 'official' spatial work carried out by built environment professionals and might reveal approaches that are of interest to those professions.

Most of our work, and indeed this exhibition, is a collaboration between artists, architects and others. We heartily encourage all visitors and other professionals to add to the exhibition and leave behind ideas, comments and web links scribbled on post-its, printouts and blank posters

Nine years after its foundation, PS² has identified nine tactics of practice

Developing small-scale interventions with reduced resources

Working as part of an informed and interconnected network and within a sequence of activities.

Acting on contested sites and places of perceived low cultural value

Exploring and celebrating the use of temporary and seasonal space, and relationships

Focusing as much on what the outcomes do as what they are.

Exposing existing intangible realities and values

Identifying and supporting key individuals / sub groups in the community,

Seeking moments of temporary community coherence and celebration

Identifying what's been learnt and valuing the pedagogy inherent in collaborative spatial projects

Exhibition Evening Discussion: 'How art practice (of PS² and others) speaks to architecture and urban design.'

(date and time confirmed through Darc Space Facebook)

Acknowledgements:

Thanks to Paul Bower for helping with the graphic layout of the exhibition posters and contributing to thought processes. Thanks to Blaithin, Robert Katie, Jo Anne and Tara for inspiring me through their work and enthusiasms; and many thanks to Maggie and Denis at Darc Space for their generous and gentle support in bringing the exhibition together.

PS² is funded by Arts Council of Northern Ireland

pssquared.org

Ruth Morrow and Peter Mutschler, Sept 2013

Work included in Exhibition

1. The Washing Line

The projects (11 in total) hung on the washing line represent the work of PS² and 3 other practices.

Aside from the descriptive text and images that allow the reader to see the substance of the project, the work is also described through categories which aim to disclose the inner workings of such projects – the budgets, timelines and the range of participants involved. They also disclose the unplanned for, intangible outcomes of projects, often with a cultural weight and legacy beyond the project itself.

Text: Ruth Morrow, Design: Paul Bower, Contributors of Content: PS², Blaithin Quinn, Robert Burke and Katie Dowling, Jo Anne Butler and Tara Kennedy

Contributions to the washing line are invited from those viewing the exhibition

2. Rosegarden Caravan for Ballykinler

Produced by Public Works in collaboration with the residents of Ballykinler, within the UP-Down Project curated by PS², 2011

2. Unedited Public Space

An image of a public space in Belfast where PS² curated a series of events and text reflecting on the nature of the image and what it conveys about our civic spaces.

Text: Ruth Morrow; Contributors of Content: PS²

4. Housekeeping

Two images from the ‘Typically Local’ workshop organized by Public Works, within the UP-Down Project curated by PS² for Ballykinler, 2011. And accompanying text reflecting on the role of the engaged creative practitioner in society.

Text: Ruth Morrow; Contributors of Content: PS²